

Notably, the House bill would not shut down spending by all independent groups but only certain independent groups. No, the House would leave Republican-leaning 501(c)(6) trade associations free to raise and spend money, soft money, corporate money, money over and above McCain-Feingold spending limits. That is what this is about.

These trade associations, such as Americans For Job Security, spend millions of dollars in ads to help elect Republican candidates. Nearly every Republican Member of the Senate elected last cycle will benefit by ads run by this group. Those ads were funded with soft money.

If the people who want to change the present campaign financing laws want to do it, let's do it the right way: take a look at everything, not just take out of the blue certain things they may not like such as the 527s.

What about these 501(c)(6) organizations? You will not find trade associations, though, mentioned in their bill, in the House bill. That makes no sense. We know less about these Republican groups than we do of 527 organizations. That is because 527s are required to disclose donors and how they spend that money. There is no such requirement for these trade associations.

Here is another even more significant example of the tricks House Republicans are playing. The House bill repeals the critical limits on national party giving to individual campaigns. Right now, the Republican National Committee may only direct a limited amount of funding to individual congressional and Presidential campaigns according to a specified formula that is in the McCain-Feingold law. The House would do away with these limits.

What would that mean? It would mean, instead of the limited amount of money that is available now, thousands—hundreds of thousands—of dollars could be given. It would mean that the Republican National Committee could give unlimited amounts to candidates in this cycle and to Presidential candidates in 2008. What we did in McCain-Feingold improved the system. Now, if the RNC can give unlimited amounts to candidates in this cycle and Presidential candidates in 2008, that is no small matter when you consider the RNC has roughly \$40 million on hand right now.

This provision made its way into an amendment filed by Senator MCCAIN on lobbying reform we did in this body, an amendment which would weaken that bill associated with his name. On his behalf, I say he did the right thing: He never offered the amendment, never called up the amendment, and the Senate bill remained clean of such rollbacks.

Democrats and Republicans alike have supported these restrictions because they are critical to protecting our political process from corruption in fact and in appearance. The authors of the last major reform bill—Senators MCCAIN and FEINGOLD—in an amicus

brief with the court involving these limits called them “essential . . . to maintain the public's confidence in the integrity of our political system” and “indispensable to any [campaign finance] regulatory program.” That is what they said.

Without such limits, the Senators argued that “the public's faith and participation in the political process will continue to decline.” That also is another quote. Such expenditures, they argued “create at least the perception that those who donate large sums to political parties . . . may enjoy positions of ‘improper influence.’”

These were wise words by Senators MCCAIN and FEINGOLD. I think we all should live by them.

In the wake of Abramoff, DELAY, and Cunningham, Americans are looking for us to change course. The House bill will keep us headed in the wrong direction. For that reason, Democrats will stand opposed.

If there is going to be an attempt to do campaign finance reform above and beyond what was done with McCain-Feingold, then let's do it. Let's have committee hearings. Let's have a bill reported to the Senate and have a fair debate on what we need to do to clean this up, not just take one particular aspect of it. The Congress must not ignore the American people's desire to do a better job in ethics here in Washington.

In January, when Americans across the country were crying for reform, we took the lead and fundamentally changed the debate on ethics and lobbying reform. I think it is commendable—as I have said here on the floor on a number of occasions, Madam President—I think it is commendable that we were able to pass this lobbying reform bill on a bipartisan basis. Thanks to our work, on a bipartisan basis, we passed some significant reforms that will ensure the Government of the people focuses on the needs of the people.

It would be unfortunate to see these efforts sabotaged and ultimately fail because the House majority has backed away from real reform and instead has decided that this legislation should be a vehicle to advance a partisan campaign finance agenda. If the trial of TOM DELAY and prison terms for Jack Abramoff and Duke Cunningham do not convince the Republican Party to clean up its act, Americans should begin to wonder what will.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. REID. I would be happy to.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I would like to ask my good friend, the Democratic leader, if his concern here is that the House bill overruled what we call the Colorado II decision in the Supreme Court, which basically would allow political parties which are now restricted to raising 100 percent hard money to spend in coordination with the campaigns whatever they choose to spend. Is that the complaint I hear from my good friend, the Democratic leader?

Mr. REID. Madam President, I apologize, through the Chair, to my friend. I do not know what Colorado II is. Is that what you said?

Mr. MCCONNELL. What the Supreme Court held in Colorado II was that the prohibition on parties spending above what we call the coordinated amount remained intact and that parties could spend whatever they wanted to as independent expenditures, meaning they could not consult with the campaigns.

I was listening to my good friend, the Democratic leader, and I understand he was decrying a provision in the House bill that, in effect, overturned that Supreme Court decision and allowed the parties to spend, in coordination with their campaigns, money beyond what is called the coordinated. And the Senator from Nevada was suggesting that was somehow, I gather, corrupting the process, if that money, which could now be spent independently of the campaigns, was spent in coordination with the campaigns.

Did I understand correctly?

Mr. REID. Madam President, through the Chair to my friend, the senior Senator from Kentucky, your explanation of asking me a question points out my problem with what the House is doing. I believe what we need is to have reform legislation in the House comparable to what we did here in the Senate. I think there are a number of us who would like to have gone further than what we did, but I would be satisfied with that. But for the House to call this lobbying and ethics reform is wrong. What they have tried to do is reform campaign finance laws.

I say to my friend, if we are going to do a reform of campaign finance laws, then what we should do is have the committees of proper jurisdiction hear what changes they think should be made, with the advocates of this, bring it to the floor, and have a debate.

As my friend indicated, talking about Colorado II, this is very complicated stuff. And I think if we are going to reform a little piece of it, let's look at it all. Let's look at how trade associations work. Let's look at everything. I am happy to do that. But what I am not happy to do is have the House call something lobbying and ethics reform when it is campaign finance reform. That is my concern.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, could I ask my friend one further question?

Mr. REID. Of course.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Is it still the position of the leader and the majority of those on that side of the aisle that the position they used to hold, which was that these so-called 527 groups should be treated like political parties and therefore have their contributions kept like a political party—that used to be the position of the majority of the Democrats, that the 527 groups which operate like parties should be treated like parties in terms of the contribution levels—I now gather that my good friend and a number of his colleagues